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### **Artist's Statement: Sanitized**

Rana Awdish

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## Cover Art

**Artist's Statement: Sanitized**

I completed my piece *Sanitized*, on the cover of this issue, following a full year of the COVID-19 pandemic and our collective struggle to learn to bear witness to invisible things.

Inspired by the intangibility of the suffering to those who were not directly facing COVID-19, I painted the figure to convey a kind of invisibility. The deaths that occurred in hospitals and nursing homes were viscerally unknowable in that they were removed from the lived experiences of families. The difficulty of mourning losses that happened in those closed wards contributed to my depiction of the figure as a kind of ephemeral, liquid ghost.

Physical touch was so absent for so many that year. To represent that lack of tangible



Sanitized

connection, there is an elision of physical form. In the blankness of her stare, there is an awareness that she is not fully known.

In terms of my medium choice, in the early days of the pandemic, local distilleries were making hand sanitizer instead of producing alcohol, and that sense of repurposing for utility lead me to want to repurpose hand sanitizer for art. I was gesturing toward both our ability and the very human need to find beauty and meaning in difficult events by using what is directly available to us. I also felt a congruence between the rapid evaporation of the medium and our lives as very limited periods within which we can express ourselves.

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